

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KATHMA 02033 171112Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 TRSE-00 PC-01 DHA-02 AGR-05 /069 W

-----171858Z 037275 /47

R 171010Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8314

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE KATHMANDU 2033

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, NP

SUBJ: K.B. SINGH OUSTED

REF: KATHMANDU 2016

1. THE KING HAS ACCEPTED THE RESIGNATION ON MAY 26 OF KHADGA BAHADUR SINGH AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BACK TO THE VILLAGE CAMPAIGN, AS WELL AS HIS RESIGNATION AS MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, IRRIGATION AND LAND REFORM. BISWA (VISHNU) BANDHU THAPA HAS BEEN APPOINTED CHARIMAN OF THE BACK TO THE VILLAGE CAMPAIGN, BUT THE MINISTERIAL POST REMAINS VACANT FOR THE TIME BEING.

2.COMMENT: SINGH'S DISMISSAL IS THE RESULT OF THE KING'S DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WAY THE BACK TO THE VILLAGE CAMPAIGN MANAGED THE RECENT ELECTIONS. THE PALACE HAS BECOME CONCERNED AT THE WIDESPREAD CRITICISM OVER UNCONTESTED ELECTIONS AT ALL LEVELS OF THE PANCHAYAT SYSTEM, CRITICISM WHICH RANGES FROM THE "COMMON MAN" UP TO AND INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER TULSI GIRI (REFTEL.) WHILE THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WAS WRITTEN AT THE TIME OF THE INDIAN EMERGENCY, IT LOOKS INCREASINGLY ANACHRONISTIC IN THE FACE OF WORLDWIDE CONCERN OVER HUMAN RIGHTS.

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3.SINGH HAD BEEN A STAUNCH DEFENDER OF THE "CONSENSUS ELECTION" PROCEDURE, ARGUING THAT IT WOULD ALLOW THE KING TO REMAIN IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE INTERNAL POLITICAL FIGURES AT THE SAME TIME BRINGING NEW AND TRUSTED POLITICAL FIGURES INTO PANCHAYAT POLITICS. WHILE THE PALACE MIGHT HAVE TOLERATED PUBLIC DISSATISFACTION WITH ONE CANDIDATE ELECTIONS, THE KING IS REPORTEDLY UNHAPPY WITH THE CALIBER OF OFFICIALS VIRTUALLY HANDPICKED BY SINGH.

CORRUPTION AND FAVORITISM WERE RAMPANT IN THE MOST RECENT ELECTIONS, AND AS A RESULT, MANY PANCHAYAT WORKERS WERE BECOMING ALIENATED OVER WHAT THEY SAW AS A MOVE TO FURTHER RESTRICT ACCESS TO HIGHER POLITICAL OFFICE. PRIME MINISTER GIRI IS ALSO BELIEVED TO HAVE ARGUED THAT SINGH'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY WAS TOO CONSERVATIVE AND WOULD, IN TIME, FURTHER ERODE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE PANCHAYAT SYSTEM.

4. SINGH'S DISMISSAL SHOULD GIVE CONSIDERABLE ENCOURAGEMENT TO MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT WHO HAVE URGED THE KING TO REFORM THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO AT LEAST ALLOW MULTIPLE CANDIDACIES FOR PANCHAYAT POSTS. THE FOREIGN MININSTER RECENTLY TOLD THE CHARGE THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT SUCH CHANGES WOULD COME INTO EFFECT WITHIN A YEAR. OTHERS HAVE REPORTED THAT THE KING MAY MAKE SOME REFORMS AS EARLY AS NEXT MONTH WHEN THE NATIONAL PANCHAYAT IS IN SESSION.

5. THAPA WAS A FOUNDER OF THE NEPALI CONGRESS PARTY AND SERVED AS THE PARTY'S WHIP IN PARLIAMENT IN 1959-60 FOLLOWING THE DISMISSA OF B.P. KOIRALA AS PRIME MINISTER, THAPA JOINED THE "PANCHAYAT SYSTEM" AND BROKE WITH THE CONGRESS PARTTY. HE WAS REWARDED WITH THE PORTFOLIOS OF HOME AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT. HE BECAME HEAD OF THE NATIONAL PANCHAYAT IN 1963 BUT FOLLOWING HIS RESIGNATION IN 1966 HE WAS APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF THE BACK TO THE VILLAGE CAMPAIGN AND SERVED IN THAT CAPACITY FROM 1968-1972. HE ATTEMPTED TO MAKE A POLITICAL COMEBACK IN 1973 BY RUNNING FOR THE PANCHAYAT BUT WAS DEFEATED AFTER KIRTI NIDHI BISTA AND OTHERS IN THE GOVERNMENT RIGGED THE ELECTIONS IN HIS DISTRICT. THAPA HAS BEEN ABSENT FROM THE NATIONAL SCENE IN RECENT YEARS.

EAVES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS, REMOVAL FROM OFFICE
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977KATHMA02033
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770175-0403
Format: TEL
From: KATHMANDU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770550/aaaabqpr.tel
Line Count: 97
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 KATHMANDU 2016
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2494119
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: K.B. SINGH OUSTED
TAGS: PINT, PINS, NP, (SINGH, KHADGA BAHADUR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ca943d92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009